

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 25, 2006, 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers

PRESENT

Cindy Felsten
Ian Kohen
Greg Lewis
Jay Myers
Gil Palmer
Chrystal Pushor
John Roberts
Marie Schroeder
Jason Staley

ABSENT

Wes Roy
Barbara Stevens

Meeting began as unofficial due to lack of a quorum

STAFF PRESENT:

Deputy Director Lorraine Smith, Secretary Lula Young.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Felsten reported the January beginning balance as \$6,199.02. A funding donation issued to the Titan's Human Rights project of \$100.00, leaving an ending balance of \$6,099.02. Deputy Director Smith clarified the donation to Northside Middle School for the Titan's project. The donation is to assist in providing supplies to students as they complete their Human Rights projects. Students shared their projects with commissioners in 2005.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Deputy Director Smith provided the report on behalf of Director Tinsley who is out of town. The Deputy Director advised Commissioners that staff experienced another busy month at the end of a successful year. A record eighteen cases were filed in 2006. A majority of the cases was mediated and the backlog reduced contributing as an additional success for the Commission.

The first case of the year was filed in January. The race in employment case is pending a reply from the respondent. Commissioner Barb Stevens completed a highly successful mediation in January involving a case in which the complainant had worked for the employer

for approximately seventeen years. This sex in employment case settlement was one of the highest the Commission had negotiated. The complainant also received a neutral letter of reference as well as training for the respondent. Recent staff changes may have contributed to the missteps in human rights law.

***** Meeting Called to Order *****

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner Felsten called roll. **Commissioner Myers moved to accept the November minutes as submitted, Commissioner Felsten seconded. Motion carried.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT (con't):

Deputy Director Smith continued the Director's report, informing Commissioners of the trainings Director Tinsley continues to provide in the community. In January, the Director provided four sessions of religious diversity training for the Columbus Police Department, utilizing the Chicago Police Department DVD. Director Tinsley previously advised that the officers displayed a lot of interest in the segment on the Sikh faith. Director Tinsley also completed a presentation at Asbury United Methodist Church for their Human Relations Day.

The Deputy Director also reported that Director Tinsley continues to attend multiple meetings of Anti-Bullying Task Force. Staff and Commissioners Lewis and Roberts attended various activities for the Martin Luther King Day Celebration including the M. L. K. scholarship program at Calvary Community Church the previous week. The Deputy Director provided impromptu greetings during the M. L. K. evening session where the guest speaker was Carl Sharperson, Annapolis graduate and pilot for the U. S. Marine Corp.

Deputy Director Smith reported that she, Director Tinsley and Chairperson Palmer provided technical assistance to the NAACP Ministerial Alliance. The Alliance group is focused on youth initiatives and attempting to address some issues they believe are occurring within the school system with African-American youth and the need to improve the number of African-American administrators and teachers and to find support in the community and schools for African-American youth. The technical assistance included participating in a meeting between the ministers and Tracy Souza to look at how the minister's goals will possibly fit in with some of the initiatives that Cummins, Inc. is involved in with the school system. Overall, the meeting went well. Ideas and suggestions generated during the meeting included Ms. Souza connecting the group with the Cummins-Columbus group, an initiative that has to do with education, sponsored by Joe Loughrey.

Deputy Director Smith reviewed the recent press release announcing that the Commission is accepting new commissioner applications and referenced the release as it was printed in the Republic. The Deputy Director clarified that the article appeared misleading and that staff did not indicate that Commissioners Stevens, Felsten and Pushor had resigned from the commission. The deadline to submit an application is Feb.17, 2006, and that Martha Myers is

the council liaison; she is no longer the interim liaison for Craig Hawes. Commissioner Myers noted that the press release was printed in two separate locations in the Republic newspaper.

Deputy Director Smith informed Commissioners that the Mayor announced that preparations have started for the 2007 budget proposals. Deputy Director Smith then asked Commissioners to review the list of sub-committees she had provided with the initial volunteers, and asked that Commissioners review the list of committees in need of volunteers and contact the office with committee choices so that planning and scheduling can begin in order to meet the goals and objectives for 2006.

Deputy Director Smith reported that the Commission is sponsoring eighteen middle school youths enabling them to attend the Middle School Youth Summit (MSYS), sponsored by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI). The Youth Summit is February 22, 2006, at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds in Noblesville. Fourteen students from Central and four from Northside Middle Schools will be attending. This will be a great opportunity for these students to be involved in a leadership type event and to network with other students. Commissioner Lewis asked if participating students would be traveling on a bus and whom the adult chaperones would be. Deputy Director Smith confirmed the bus transportation and that Allison McKay and Rudy Olivo would be chaperoning the youths.

OPEN FORUM:

Commissioner Felsten shared her experience of the Martin Luther King celebration at the statehouse. She recommended one speaker, Minister Jeffrey I. Johnson of Washington D.C., as a potential annual dinner speaker. She was impressed with his youth and boldness while speaking to legislators. He challenged educators on how they are teaching students the speech and not the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King. Mr. Johnson is a young articulate man, immediately recognized by the youth in attendance as the host of B.E.T.'s, Cousin Jeff's Chronicles.

ANNUAL DINNER:

Deputy Director Smith advised that an email was sent to Tavis Smiley's office that thanked him for his consideration and advised that we were pursuing another speaker was acknowledged by Mr. Smiley's assistant who responded with wishes for a successful dinner. An invitation to speak will be sent to Dr. Eric Jolly. Information on Dr. Gonzalez was shared with Commissioners as the next potential speaker if Dr. Jolly is not available.

ESSAY/ART CONTEST:

Director Tinsley has a topic idea for the Essay/Art contest. It will be ready to go out by the end of February.

ACTION ITEM - 2006 MEETING DATES:

Commissioner Myers moved to approve 2006 Meeting dates. Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion approved.

CULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE:

Vice-Chairperson Myers stated that Commissioner Roy has voiced an interest in continuing his appointment as the commission liaison to the Mayor's Cultural Awareness Committee. The Vice-Chair suggested that the Commission continue Wes' appointment to the committee and if he chooses not to accept, another commissioner be selected. **Commissioner Schroeder moved that Wes Roy be accepted as the Cultural Awareness Committee Representative of the Commission and if he declines, John Roberts will be the representative. Commissioner Staley seconded. Motion approved.**

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE/SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2006-07:

Commissioner Myers appointed Commissioners Staley and Lewis to serve on the Nominations Committee with him. Those Commissioners will contact nominees to verify their willingness to serve as an officer. The slate of officers will be presented for a vote at the February meeting.

LIAISON UPDATES – GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:

Commissioner Kohen updated the Commissioners on the recent Gay/Straight Alliance meeting. Their primary focus was discussion on membership and maximizing participation. There currently aren't any major issues under discussion.

LIAISON UPDATES – INTERFAITH FORUM:

Commissioner Kohen advised that although he was unable to attend the last meeting of the Forum, he did attend a religious service that occurs monthly. Although attendance was low, the meeting was interesting and the topic was Kwanzaa and another about the Ba'hai faith.

ACTION ITEM: CHICAGO POLICE TRAINING VIDEO:

Commissioners viewed the introductory and Islam segments of the religious diversity training video produced by the Chicago Police department.

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Staley moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Roberts seconded. Meeting adjourned.